

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE 9318
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINR
SUBJECT: FRANK CLUSKEY ELECTED LEADER OF LABOR PARTY

REF: DUBLIN 1488

1. AS EXPECTED, FRANK CLUSKEY WAS ELECTED LEADER OF THE IRISH LABOR PARTY TO SUCCEED BRENDAN CORISH. THE BALLOT TURNED OUT TO BE CLOSER THAN EXPECTED, WITH CLUSKEY AND LABOR MINISTER O'LEARY TIED AFTER THE FIRST BALLOT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PARTY. HOWEVER, ONE VOTE SHIFTED AND CLUSKEY WON 9-7 ON THE SECOND BALLOT. O'LEARY WAS UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED DEPUTY LEADER.

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2. THE BEARDED, GENIAL, FRANK CLUSKEY IS SEEN AS A MODERATE, UNIFYING FORCE IN THIS SMALL BUT FACTION-RIDDEN PARTY. ALTHOUGH HIS RHETORIC IN THE PAST HAS OFTEN SEEMED LEFT-OF-CENTER, IT SEEMS THAT DURING THE LAST FOUR YEARS OF RESPONSIBILITY HE HAS MOVED TOWARD THE LABOR CENTER. HIS STATEMENTS SINCE ELECTION AS PARTY LEADER HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS AND WE DO NOT

EXPECT ANY BOLD INITIATIVE. CLUSKEY HAS CAREFULLY AVOIDED COMMITTING HIMSELF ON THE FUTURE OF THE COALITION WITH FINE GAEL.

3. AT 47, CLUSKEY HAS REACHED THE TOP AFTER A LONG AND DETERMINED STRUGGLE. STARTING OUT AS A BUTCHER, BUT TRYING SEVERAL TRADES BEFORE BECOMING A FULL TIME UNION OFFICIAL IN 1954 (WORKER'S UNION OF IRELAND), HE EVENTUALLY REACHED THE IRISH PARLIAMENT (DAIL) IN 1965. HIS EDUCATION WAS SOMEWHAT MEAGRE, AND HE ADMITS THAT HE QUOTE KIND OF PACKED THE WHOLE THING IN WHEN I WAS 12 OR 13. UNQUOTE HOWEVER, LATER HE RETURNED TO THE BOOKS AS A PART TIME STUDENT IN THE EXPERIMENTAL QUOTE PEOPLE'S COLLEGE UNQUOTE. A YEAR AT HARVARD IN TRADE UNION ADMINISTRATION IN 1958 CAPPED HIS LATER EDUCATION. WITH MUCH READING AND EXPERIENCE WE CONSIDER HIM WELL-VERSED IN POLITICS AND ECONOMICS. HIS FOUR YEARS AS PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY IN SOCIAL WELFARE HAVE GAINED HIM A HIGH REPUTATION AS ONE TO GET THINGS DONE BUT ALSO AS A COMPASSIONATE QUOTE FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE UNQUOTE.

4. CLUSKEY IS A SLOW, PONDEROUS, AND SOMEWHAT INARTICULATE SPEAKER, BUT HE HAS AN APPEALING WARM WIT AND IN TOPICS WITH WHICH HE IS FAMILIAR, I.E. MOSTLY INTERNAL ECONOMICS, HE IS WELL ABLE TO HOLD HIS OWN WITH THE TWO OTHER PARTY LEADERS. ALTHOUGH HE HAS BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO QUITE A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC MEETINGS OVER THE YEARS, HE DOES NOT SEEM WELL-VERSED OR PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IN GENERAL, THE PARTY SEEMS TO HAVE OPTED FOR A LEADER MUCH IN THE MOLD OF THE OUTGOING BRENDAN CORISH, I.E. A QUIET, THOUGHTFUL, DIGNIFIED, EXPERIENCED AND THOROUGHLY LIKEABLE MAN IN PREFERENCE TO THE BRILLIANT BUT ABRASIVE YOUNG MICHAEL O'LEARY. CLUSKEY IS MARRIED TO THE FORMER EILEEN GILLESPIE, HAS ONE SON AND TWO DAUGHTERS. RENDAHL

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